

Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended): An online shopping method for exchanging information concerning a commodity at a shopping site where commodities can be purchased online, the online shopping method executed by a server at the shopping site comprising the steps of:

displaying commodities on sale at the shopping site;

displaying information concerning information providers who are included in information providers for a commodity selected from among the displayed commodities and who are currently logged on to the shopping site;

accepting a message input from a purchaser to a selected one of ~~for~~ the displayed information providers ~~as regards~~ regarding the selected commodity;

transmitting the input message to ~~an~~ the information provider selected from the information providers;

receiving a reply message for the transmitted message from the selected information provider; and

transmitting the reply message to the purchaser;

granting a privilege to the selected information provider ~~who has provided the received reply message~~, provided that information as to an effect that the selected commodity is was purchased is input by the purchaser;

storing reliability points of information providers on an information provider basis;

receiving, from the purchaser, an input of evaluation on the reply message as to the purchased commodity;

varying reliability points of the selected information provider, based on the

evaluation by the purchaser; and

displaying, on a terminal of the purchaser, the reliability points of information providers on an information provider basis as information concerning the information providers.

2. (canceled).

3. (currently amended): The online shopping method according to claim [2] 1, wherein the privilege is points that can be used in the online shopping.

4. (currently amended): The online shopping method according to claim [2] 1, wherein the privilege is to give back a fixed proportion of a price of a commodity for which the information provider has provided information, to the information provider.

5. (currently amended): An online shopping system for exchanging information concerning a commodity at a shopping site where commodities can be purchased online, the online shopping system comprising:

a purchaser terminal comprising a display unit for displaying information concerning information providers who are included in information providers corresponding to a commodity on sale at the shopping site and who are currently logged on to the shopping site, and a messenger processing unit for transmitting a message concerning a commodity corresponding to the information provider, from a purchaser to an information provider selected from the information providers, and receiving a reply message for the message from the selected information provider; and

a shopping site operation apparatus comprising a commodity management unit for storing commodities on sale at the shopping site, and a user information management unit for storing information concerning users of the shopping site,

wherein the purchaser terminal transmits evaluation concerning the received reply message to the shopping site operation apparatus, and

wherein the shopping site operation apparatus grants a privilege to the selected information provider corresponding to the reply message that has become a subject of the evaluation, stores reliability points of information providers on an information provider basis, and varies reliability points of the selected information provider, based on the evaluation, and

wherein the display unit of the purchaser terminal displays the reliability points of information providers on an information provider basis as information concerning the information providers .

6. (previously presented): The online shopping system according to claim 5, wherein the user information management unit stores the information provider and a privilege corresponding to the information provider so as to associate them with each other.

7. (previously presented): The online shopping system according to claim 5, wherein the shopping site operation apparatus stores the message transmitted from the purchaser terminal and the reply message to the message as a message log for the commodity.

8. The online shopping system according to claim 5, wherein:

the shopping site operation apparatus further comprises a sales processing unit responsive to reception of information to an effect that a commodity selected at the purchaser terminal is purchased, for conducting sales processing of the commodity, and

after the sales processing unit has finished sales processing of the selected commodity, the shopping site operation apparatus grants a privilege corresponding to the evaluation received from the purchaser terminal.

9. (previously presented): The online shopping system according to claim 5, wherein the information provider is a user of the shopping site who has a purchase history of the corresponding commodity.

10. (currently amended): A computer program embodied on a computer-readable medium and executed in an online shopping system for exchanging information concerning a commodity at a shopping site where commodities can be purchased online, the computer program comprising the steps of:

displaying commodities on sale at the shopping site;

displaying information concerning information providers who are included in information providers for a commodity selected from among the displayed commodities and who are currently logged on to the shopping site;

accepting a message input for the displayed information providers from a purchaser of the selected commodity;

transmitting the input message to a selected information provider;

receiving a reply message for the transmitted message from the selected information provider;

transmitting the reply message to the purchaser;

transmitting identification information of the selected commodity, identification information of a purchaser who purchases the selected commodity, and identification information of the information provider, provided that information as to an effect that the selected commodity is was purchased is input by the purchaser; and

granting a privilege to the selected information provider ~~who has provided the received reply message~~, provided that information as to an effect that the selected commodity is was purchased is input by the purchaser;

storing reliability points of information providers on an information provider basis;

receiving, from the purchaser, an input of evaluation on the reply message as to the purchased commodity;

varying reliability points of the selected information provider, based on the evaluation by the purchaser; and

displaying, on a terminal of the purchaser, the reliability points of information providers on an information provider basis as information concerning the information providers.

11. (currently amended): A method for improving reliability of information provided for a commodity purchaser by an apparatus for operating a shopping site where commodities can be purchased online, the method comprising the steps of:
- displaying information of commodities and a list of information providers

concerning a commodity on a terminal of a purchaser who has logged in to the shopping site, by using the operation apparatus;

selecting, on the terminal of the purchaser, an information provider from the list of information providers, and transmitting a message concerning a commodity desired to purchase to a terminal of the selected information provider via the operation apparatus;

receiving the message at the terminal of the selected information provider, and transmitting a reply message for the received message to the terminal of the purchaser via the operation apparatus;

after the purchaser has purchased the commodity from the shopping site, transmitting a comment including evaluation concerning the reply message from the terminal of the purchaser to the operation apparatus; and

in the operation apparatus, receiving the comment, updating evaluation of the selected information provider, and notifying the selected information provider of the updated evaluation;

storing reliability points of information providers on an information provider basis;

receiving, from the purchaser, an input of evaluation on the reply message as to the purchased commodity;

varying reliability points of the selected information provider, based on the evaluation by the purchaser; and

displaying on the terminal of the purchaser, the reliability points of information providers on an information provider basis as information concerning the information providers.

12. (previously presented): The method according to claim 11, wherein the listed information providers are currently logged on at a point of time at which the purchaser is currently logged on, and the message and the reply message are transmitted and received online.

13. (previously presented): The method according to claim 11, wherein the message and the reply message are stored in a storage device in the operation apparatus.

14. (previously presented): The method according to claim 11, the transmission and reception of the message and the reply message are repeated between the terminal of the purchaser and the terminal of the selected information provider a plurality of times.